

# Meeting Medical Manpower Shortages in Virginia

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**T**HE CHALLENGE of a statewide shortage of medical manpower has been met by the Virginia Council on Health and Medical Care with a program which placed 300 physicians, mostly in rural areas, within 9 years; by a similar placement program for dentists, medical technologists, and X-ray technicians; and by a statewide recruitment drive among high school and college students for all types of medical manpower.

The Virginia Council on Health and Medical Care, a private, voluntary, nonprofit organization, has among its objectives the coordination of official and voluntary groups in Virginia which have mutual interests in health and medical care. It serves as a clearinghouse on health and medical care problems and programs and assists in eliminating duplication of work and overlapping of programs.

The council was formed in 1946 because Virginia's people believed that they were not getting the health services to which they were entitled, and a number of surveys revealed shocking statistics which proved their point. It was the belief that if all groups of the State working in the field of health and medical care could exchange ideas and work together much could be accomplished to improve existing facilities and services.

Financial support for the Virginia council comes from annual memberships or contributions in varying amounts from statewide and local organizations and agencies, industry, banks, hospitals, foundations, individuals (including about 600 physicians), and other

sources. The 1960 budget of the council is \$66,000.

Activities of the council have also included the Nemours Foundation conferences on handicapped children, an annual nutrition forum, surveys, and exchange of information. The placement of physicians was organized in cooperation with the Medical Society of Virginia, the Medical College of Virginia, the University of Virginia, and the Virginia Department of Health.

In the course of these activities, it was obvious that the chief handicap to health services in the State was the shortage of qualified workers in hospitals, public health agencies, mental institutions, medical schools, and related organizations. A lack of registered nurses prevented the opening of new wings to hospitals. There were not enough technologists to meet the demands upon laboratories. Health departments suffered a shortage of directors, sanitarians, nurses, and other personnel. Full-time teachers were needed in medical schools. Except for patients, there were few if any categories with a full quota in the mental institutions. The efforts of voluntary agencies to meet specific challenges to health also were frustrated by the need for additional trained health workers.

And yet, no precise measure of the need or the shortage was available. It was apparent that before the need could be appraised and defined, the council would require a staff to determine the facts, analyze them, and initiate the specific steps necessary. Several years of attempts to function through committees, meetings, and conferences had resulted in little gain. In May 1958, Cynthia N. Warren, R.N., who had been executive secretary of the Kentucky

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State Association of Registered Nurses for 10 years, was appointed director of the health personnel program. The program was started with a grant of \$10,000 from the Old Dominion Foundation and with council funds to match.

For a beginning, she limited her plans to professions associated with hospitals, which employ most health workers. A preliminary survey of Virginia's hospitals, compared with results of a 1957 survey conducted by the American Hospital Association, found them below the national average in every category of health personnel. With this information as an indication of need, a more detailed survey was conducted to help in planning effectively for recruitment and administration. The following information was solicited:

1. The number of personnel presently employed in each of a selected group of professional, nonprofessional, and clerical positions in Virginia hospitals, broken down into 48 categories.

2. The number of additional personnel needed in the 48 categories being studied.

3. Salaries and hours of work.

4. Fringe benefits provided for personnel.

This information, completed in June 1959, in cooperation with the Virginia Hospital Association and other groups, covered all but two hospitals in the State with 25 beds or more.

Dr. Huldah Bancroft, biostatistician, retired from Tulane Medical School, analyzed the data and prepared the report for publication.

Meanwhile, beginning in the fall of 1958, the council invited representatives of State professional societies and associations in the health field to confer on the question of setting up a State committee for recruitment. The conferees understood that individual organizations would still be responsible for recruiting to their own ranks, and that the council would simply employ a full-time staff member to fill in the gaps, categorical or geographic. After consultation with executive boards and members, all agreed to join the Health Careers Recruitment Committee. Since the committee was organized, it has expanded to represent 33 associations and agencies (see list).

One of the committee's first activities was to find out what recruitment brochures or pamphlets were available from each of the member

professions. Forty-two were collected. A questionnaire sent to junior and senior high schools in Virginia, both public and private, listed the names of the pamphlets and asked the schools to check those which were available to students through the counselor's office or the library. Schools were asked also if they had the "Health Careers Guidebook," published by the National Health Council. In this way an original contact was made with all schools through the cooperation of the Virginia Department of Education.

It was discovered that relatively few schools had adequate information on careers in health. The professions supplied the Virginia council's office with enough copies of each pamphlet to compose a packet of 42 different brochures for distribution to every school. Only the "Health Careers Guidebook" was distributed by the National Health Council directly to the schools requesting it. As a result of these actions, the young people in Virginia's schools had direct access to information on 18 different health careers, in most instances for the first time.

To supplement the materials from national organizations, it was felt that there was a need for pamphlets specifically designed for and geared to use in Virginia.

The committee first prepared a simple three-fold throwaway flier, called "Hey, About to Choose a Profession?" carrying general factual information about personnel needs in the health field. The last section of the flier, designed to be torn off, listed the 18 careers on a form to facilitate requests for specific information from the council. At the end of each month, these inquiries are tabulated and the names and addresses of the possible recruits are referred to a representative of the specified profession, who sees that this evidence of interest on the part of the student is then followed up with a letter and frequently with a personal call. According to the interest expressed, the call may come from a local physician, dietitian, pharmacist, physical therapist, or other professional living close to the student. By this means, the interest is explored and cultivated.

The largest number of requests for more information has come from students inquiring about professional nursing. Then, in order of frequency of requests, these professions fol-

lowed: X-ray technology, practical nursing, physical therapy, social work, medical technology, medicine, pharmacy, occupational therapy, medical record library science, dietetics, dentistry, veterinary medicine, hospital administration, audiology and speech correction, public health sanitation, podiatry, and health education.

The "Hey" flier is distributed in schools where the director of the health personnel program meets the students in assembly. It is supplied to hospitals by Blue Cross, and it is given out at fairs, meetings, conventions, and through organizations. Better than 10 percent of the students who have heard about the program on health careers write to the council's office for further information about one or more of the 18 professions.

The committee has issued for each of the 18 a fact sheet giving information on the type and length of education, tuition, scholarships, income, and opportunities. A set of these sheets has been placed in all Virginia high schools. Individual sheets are sent to young people requesting information on a specific career. It is the first time in Virginia that such a collection of information has been brought together. The

sheets are used as sources of information by school administrators and guidance counselors as well as by hospital administrators and others.

Also designed especially for State use, "Health Career Opportunities in Virginia" was published, with information on 13 professions. Since then a new edition, "Your Future in a Health Career," has been published with information on all 18 careers. This brochure gives a brief description of each and lists the approved schools in Virginia under each profession. The pictures used and the written statements were provided by the professional societies concerned. Ten thousand copies of "Opportunities" were distributed during the 1959-60 school year, at a cost of 9½ cents each. The new booklet, of which 20,000 copies were printed at a cost of 7¾ cents each, will be used starting with the 1960-61 school year.

A "Health Careers Information Chart" is the most recent recruitment aid to be developed. It is 22½ inches by 29 inches. The 18 professions are listed down the left-hand column, and across the top of the chart the following categories are found: nature of work, education and training, Virginia schools, where employed, employment outlook, and where to write for more

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### Agencies Represented

American Cancer Society, Virginia Division, Inc.  
 Licensed Practical Nurse Association of Virginia, Inc.  
 Medical Society of Virginia  
 Podiatry Society of Virginia  
 Speech and Hearing Association of Virginia  
 State Department of Education  
 State Department of Health  
 Virginia Association of Hospital Auxiliaries  
 Virginia Association of Hospital Pharmacy  
 Virginia Association of Medical Assistants  
 Virginia Association of Medical Record Librarians  
 Virginia Association for Mental Health, Inc.  
 Virginia Chapters, National Association of Social Workers  
 Virginia Congress of Colored Parents and Teachers  
 Virginia Congress of Parents and Teachers  
 Virginia Dietetic Association  
 Virginia Federation of Women's Clubs

Virginia Heart Association  
 Virginia Hospital Association  
 Virginia League for Nursing  
 Virginia Occupational Therapy Association  
 Virginia Pharmaceutical Association  
 Virginia Physical Therapy Association  
 Virginia Society for Crippled Children and Adults  
 Virginia Society of Medical Technologists  
 Virginia Society of X-ray Technicians  
 Virginia State Dental Association  
 Virginia State Federation of Colored Women's Clubs  
 Virginia State Nurses Association  
 Virginia Tuberculosis Association  
 Virginia Veterinary Medical Association  
 Women's Auxiliary to the Medical Society of Virginia  
 Women's Organization National Association Retail Druggists, Richmond Chapter

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information. A fund of valuable facts are available at a glance. The chart can be placed on a bulletin board or under the glass top on a desk. It has been sent to all Virginia high schools and hospitals.

A Virginia health careers poster has been displayed in schools, hospitals, and on bulletin boards. An exhibit for schools and conventions has been helpful in attracting prospective health workers to stop and confer.

A set of colored slides showing the professions in action are used in assembly programs along with a commentary on each career. Here again, as with all other career material that has been developed through the Virginia council, the professional societies participated. They arranged for the posing of the action pictures, and they supplied the accompanying commentary. Special projection equipment was purchased by the council so that the slides can be shown under any conditions which might exist in schools.

The major emphasis in the activities of the Health Careers Recruitment Committee has been centered on assemblies held in 74 high schools and 3 junior colleges during the 1959-60 school year. Through these assemblies, the director of the health personnel program has spoken to approximately 20,000 students. Some 1,200 interested adults were reached in 18 other meetings before civic groups, PTA's, women's clubs, and the like.

The director is invited to a community or a county where all local arrangements are made by her sponsoring organizations, which may be a hospital auxiliary, a women's club, a PTA, a local hospital administrator, or executive of a local voluntary health organization. Her itinerary is arranged so that she often speaks in as many as three schools in a day. In one county or a section of the State, she may speak in all high schools within 2 to 5 days. She prefers an assembly of all students from the 8th grade through the 12th. Following a film, "Helping Hands for Julie," which describes nine professions, she discusses the other nine with the use of a flannel board. When time allows, a question period follows. She also confers with individual students.

On request, she arranges for students to visit a nearby medical center or professional school

for firsthand observation. When a school requests assistance in planning a career program, the council's office will arrange for representatives from health professions, to be chosen by the school, to be present and participate. It also supplies a list of available films on careers, compiled by the council and mailed to all counselors in Virginia schools. The list was sent to the Virginia State Department of Education with the suggestion that up-to-date films on careers in health be included in the next publication of their film catalog, and be purchased when not available through the film library.

Through this "package" recruitment program, Virginia now has one central office which serves as the clearinghouse for all health career information. A guidance counselor need contact only the Virginia council to get the health careers information which is available and needed. This saves much time and promotes a more effective program as experience has shown that busy counselors and others do not take the time or trouble to search out and contact a multitude of professional organizations, few of which have a central office where information can be readily obtained.

What are the results of this recruitment program after its first school year? Is it accomplishing the purpose of getting more young people actively interested in careers in health? In an activity which involves 33 different organizations and touches thousands of students, their teachers, counselors, and others, measurement of achievement is difficult. It is reported by the Virginia Dietetic Association that the enrollment in one of the colleges which prepares dietitians increased as a direct result of the council's program. Applicants for the September 1960 class at the School of Physical Therapy at the Medical College of Virginia have doubled over last year, and requests for information have increased considerably.

More than 20,000 students were given factual information on 18 health professions in one academic year, and of these more than 2,000 took the initiative to write to the council's office for more information.

There have been other specific accomplishments of the Virginia council's careers program. For example, certain misinformation

listed in college catalogs has been called to the attention of college administrators and appropriate corrections have been made. Many guidance counselors are now more aware of the opportunities open to their students for careers in health. And obviously by providing school administrators and students with facts, with recruitment materials, and with one office which serves as a clearinghouse for all recruitment information, the council has made it relatively simple for Virginians to become informed and stay informed about the opportunities in careers in health.

Considering the limited budget—approximately \$16,000 was spent in 1959—and the fact that there is only one person to cover so large a State, the initial results appear to have been gratifying, encouraging, and worth while.

Although the approach differs necessarily

from place to place, a pattern is being developed which may possibly apply in other States where a spirit of mutual confidence and trust prevails among the professional societies and associations. Virginia is fortunate to have leadership in its professional groups which promotes cooperation on matters of general concern.

The Health Careers Recruitment Committee, for the future, hopes to do a study to determine personnel needs related to population growth, available educational facilities, and other factors; to compile a directory of scholarships; and to extend its services. Although 20,000 young people were reached during the first school year of this personalized recruitment program, this is only a small percentage of the students who, as soon as possible, are candidates for information on opportunities in the health professions.

## Biological Works Translated

The American Institute of Biological Sciences is translating and publishing seven Russian research journals in biology, with support from the National Science Foundation.

The journals are *Doklady: Biological Sciences Section*; *Doklady: Botanical Sciences Section*; *Doklady: Biochemistry Section*; *Plant Physiology*; *Microbiology*; *Soviet Soil Science*; and *Entomological Review*.

In addition to the journals, the AIBS is translating and publishing selected Russian monographs in biology. So far work has been completed on seven monographs: "Origins of Angiospermous Plants" and "Essays on the Evolutionary Morphology of Plants," by A. L. Takhtajan; "Problems in the Classification of Antagonists of Actinomycetes," by G. F. Gauze; "Marine Biology," Trudi Institute of Oceanology, volume 20, edited by B. N. Nikitin; "Arachnoidea," by A. A. Zakhvatkin; "Arachnida," by B. I. Pomerantzev; and "Plants and X-rays," by L. P. Breslavets.

Additional information may be obtained from the American Institute of Biological Sciences, 2000 P St. NW., Washington 6, D.C.